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Testimony in support of Senate Bill 112, Dylan Steigers Protection of Youth Athletes Act

Presented to the House Education Committee, Friday, March 15, 2013

Good afternoon Madam Chairman and committee members. My name is Todd Harwell. I am the Chief of the Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Bureau within the Department of Public Health and Human Services. The Department strongly supports this legislation and we thank Senator Blewett for sponsoring it. This Bill will ensure that young Montana athletes, parents, coaches and medical providers are educated on recognizing a concussion and athletes are removed from play and cleared by a medical provider before returning to play to prevent secondary impact syndrome (which is a second or subsequent concussion) which can be life altering or even fatal.

As of 2012, 43 states have passed concussion legislation for youth athletes, all specifying education, removal from play and medical clearance before return to play. By passing this law, Montana youth will be better protected from sustaining a catastrophic brain injury with better awareness and standardized removal and return to play guidelines that are implemented consistently throughout Montana school-related sports activities. The Department will gladly work with other state agencies and partners to help develop the model policies this legislation specifies and to promote the adoption of these policies by schools. Madam Chairman, committee members - thank you.